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PATENT

UNITED STATES PATENT APPLICATION

of

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for

CONTROLLABLY ROTATABLE SEAT

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

This invention relates to a rotating seat for an amusement ride.

DESCRIPTION OF THE RELATED ART

Several patents, *e.g.*, United States patent numbers 5,421,783; 5,649,866; and 5,810,671 have a passenger carrier that is accelerated upward by bungee cords and can relatively freely swing about the ends of such cords. There is, however, no control over any rotation of the carrier that does occur.

United States patent no. 6,083,111 does involve controlled rotation of a passenger chair (also termed a "support") for an amusement ride. The degree of rotation is, however, purposefully limited; the limited rotation that is possible apparently occurs only over a restricted, fixed portion of a course upon a tower; and only downward movement occurs when the chair has been rotated from its initial substantially vertical position.

Lines 31 through 37 in column 2 of patent no. 6,083,111 explain, "The passenger support, together with the passenger, is tilted forward into a falling orientation which is at a predetermined tilt-angle to the pre-fall orientation. The passenger support, together with the passenger, is dropped or propelled from the drop position to a lower position while the passenger support and the passenger are in the forward tilted falling orientation . . . ."

Lines 3 and 4 in column 3 further clarify, "for safety reasons, the tilt-angle of the passenger and the passenger support is limited . . . ."

Patent no. 6,083,111 continues, in lines 26 through 28 of column 3, by asserting, "A travel course for the carriage is established by engaging a guide that is connected to the carriage upon an elongate rail or track that is coupled to an elevating tower."

Lines 23 through 25, 39 through 42, and 46 through 49 of column 3 state, "The degree of tilt between the pre-fall orientation **92** and the falling orientation **95** is predetermined and restricted . . . . When the latching mechanism **40** is released, the passenger support **22** is permitted to tilt or be tilted from the pre-fall orientation **92** toward and into the falling orientation **95**. . . . Alternatively, the tilting action can be induced by an operating mechanism B43B which

in the described embodiment is a rotary motor and may be exemplarily electromechanical, hydraulic or other suitable configuration."

Lines 39 through 46 and 55 through 57 of column 6 consistently provide, "Upon reaching the drop position **70**, the passenger support **22** is permitted to tilt, or is tilted from the upright and sitting pre-fall orientation **92** to the tilted falling orientation **95**. To accomplish such tilting, the latching mechanism **40** is released and the passenger **55** is either motored to the tilted position using the operating mechanism **43** or the support **22** is simply allowed to drop to the tilted position and falling orientation **95** under the passenger's **55** own weight. . . . The tilting action is accommodated by the pivot connection **37** and is limited either by the operating mechanism **43** or appropriate stops." Then line 67 of column 3 through line 2 of column 7 declares, "Either simultaneously or shortly thereafter, the carriage **34** begins to drop over a falling travel distance **73**."

Finally, lines 53 through 56 in column 7 observe, "The maximum safe tilt angle **98** is experimentally determined and then the actual tilt angle **98** is restricted within a range between that determined angle and the upright position."

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The Controllably Rotatable Seat, which may be a single seat or several seats, of the present invention can be rotated at any time during the operation of an amusement ride upon which it is attached. Furthermore, this seat is able to be rotated at least substantially ninety degrees.

The seat need not be attached by a track to a tower and is, preferably, attached to a platform that is support by cables, preferably three. Each of such cables travels to an elevated point on a tower. In such an embodiment, the platform is elevated as the cables are retracted down the towers.

Rotation of the seat may be accomplished by an electrical motor, pneumatics, hydraulics, or any other mechanism that is well known in the art for producing rotation.

Rotation can be based upon the seat's having reached a target detectable with a proximity sensor; the passage of time; the seat's having reached a height measured with any device known in the art for measuring distances, such as a laser range finder; a cable's having moved a specified distance, which can be determined, for example, by noting the revolutions of a pulley over which the cable passes; or any other measurable criterion, such as a desired speed or acceleration. Determination of the time for rotating the seat to its original position can be similarly made.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Figure 1 shows a first view of the Controllably Rotatable Seat.

Figure 2 provides an alternate view of the Controllably Rotatable Seat.

Figure 3 depicts a target on a tower to be detected by a sensor associated with the Controllably Rotatable Seat.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

The seat **1** is attached to an arm **2** that is rotated by a means for rotating **3** which is preferably an electric motor but which can be pneumatics, hydraulics, or any other mechanism that is well known in the art for producing rotation. (The term "seat" is used herein to mean either a single seat or a group of two or more seats.)

Preferably, but not necessarily, a lever arm **4** connects the arm **2** to the means for rotating **3** so that the point of rotation of the means for rotating **3** will be substantially aligned with the center of gravity of a participant sitting on the seat **1**.

Also preferably, but not necessarily, the lower portion **5** of the seat **1** is a saddle seat, *i.e.*, it is formed in substantially the same shape as a saddle for a horse, in order to cause the participant to feel exposed to excitement.

The arm **2** and, consequently, the seat **1** can preferably, but not necessarily, rotate at least ninety degrees.

Preferably, but not necessarily, there would also be a means for retaining the participant to the seat **1**, such as a harness.

The arm **2** and the means for rotating **3**, as well as the lever arm **4** when employed, are attached to a platform **6**, which can be slidably connected to a vertical tower or placed upon any other amusement ride (in fact, some rides, such as the car of a roller coaster, can, themselves, serve as the platform **6**), but which is preferably connected to cables **7** that are suspended from towers **8**, preferably, but not necessarily three towers. As explained above, each of the cables **7** travels to an elevated point on a tower **8**; and the platform **6** is elevated as the cables **7** are retracted down the towers **8**. Attachment of the arm **2**, and the lever arm **4** when employed, is a rotatable attachment to the platform **6**.

A timer **9** communicating with the means for rotating **3** can be programmed with the time to commence rotation and the time to begin rotating the seat **1** to its original orientation.

Alternatively, a target **10** can be located on a tower **8** or other object at a point where rotation is desired to commence as the seat **1** passes the target **10**, and a second target **11** can be placed on a tower **8** or other object at a point where it is desired to have the seat **1** start rotating back to its original orientation. A sensor **12** capable of detecting the targets **10**, **11** would be mounted on the platform **6** and communicate either directly or through a preferably, but not

necessarily, programmable, logic unit **13** such as a computer with the means for rotating **3**. Optionally, only a single target **10** would be employed; and the seat **1** would start rotating as it passed the target **10** going in a first direction and would begin rotating to its original orientation as it passed the target **10** going in the substantially opposite direction.

A device known in the art for measuring distances could also determine the distance between a known elevation (or other position) and the platform **6**. Such device communicates through a, preferably, but not necessarily, programmable, logic unit **13** such as a computer with the means for rotating **3**. Initial rotation would commence at a given distance, and rotation back to the original orientation of the seat **1** would begin at another specified distance, with such criteria either set into the logic unit **13** at the factory or, when the logic unit is programmable, programmed into the logic unit **13** by a user. Communication in this embodiment would preferably, but not necessarily, be by digitally encoded radio signals.

Finally, when cables **7** are employed to propel the platform **6**, any device well known in the art for measuring the distance a cable **7** moves could function just as does the device for measuring distances discussed in the preceding paragraph.

Also, as discussed above, any device known in the art for measuring speed or acceleration or any other measurable criterion associated with the amusement ride could determine the time for rotation and the time for return of the seat **1** to its original orientation just as discussed for the device for measuring distances.